

Dear Parents/Carers,

This week has seen us return to providing some provision for a few vulnerable students and children of key workers in school. We have had between 8 and a maximum of 15 students in each day and enjoyed running a few different activities as well as giving students a chance to carry on with their online learning in the library. The booking sheet (running up until May at the moment) can be found on the front page of our website as well as [here](#).

We have sent out quite a lot of information and advice about online learning and our provision. This can all be found on our website under curriculum – Home Learning: [here](#).

There is advice for students on how to structure their days, who to contact if they have problems, links to key information and also to various learning sites. The key point to emphasise is that we recognise that everyone's circumstances vary considerably at the moment. Some may have good access to the internet, resources, space and time, whilst others don't. The most important advice I have to offer is for students to look after themselves and try and keep some routine, balance and variety in their days. If they are managing to keep their brains active and do some learning each day, that is key. Whilst no-one should 'not bother', students should not get stressed and anxious about completing everything set and getting everything handed in. It is about them doing as much as they reasonably can whilst not trying to work or stay online for too long. As a rough guide, recent experience and wider research suggests that 3-4 hours of online learning a day is a maximum, healthy amount.

Most feedback suggests that students have more than enough work set; if students do want to extend or vary their learning we have published a list with a whole load of suggestions and recommendations (see [here](#)). The BBC are about to go live with their substantial online package of materials, which should be high quality. Your sons/daughters don't need to do more than their teachers are setting, but they may find the materials at [BBC Bitesize Daily](#), starting from this Monday 20 April, useful.

Speaking personally, I have a 14 year old and 17 year old at home at the moment. My wife is also working from home. We are struggling with broadband speeds and the internet lagging. We're also struggling to get my sons out of bed and to limit the PS4 and social media time. We are managing to enjoy each other's company at times and we're playing darts and poker regularly as a family – there are a lot of holes appearing in the wall around the dart board (not my darts). I think, like for many of you, our experiences of this strange time are mixed. I would like to stress that for many staff, like many of you, this experience is harder. Many are dealing with their own young children at home – trying to manage a household, deliver online learning and keep young children home learning and entertained. What staff can offer and provide will therefore vary. We are all doing our best.

Each Head of Year is now publishing a weekly newsletter for their year group online using SWAY. This is being emailed to students and is designed to help us stay in touch and keep giving key advice, messages and support. They are also broadcasting brief assemblies, talking directly to students. Links to both will also be on our website. Do please take a look yourself if you can. Almost all of us hate the idea of filming ourselves and sending this out but staff are being brave and taking the plunge. Like us all, I'm on a steep learning curve and, with great reluctance, am looking to get a brief filmed message out to all students this week. It will not be fancy, clever or exciting I'm afraid!

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We have also set up a system to try and stay in touch and contact all students on a rotating basis. This will mean you should receive a call from your child's tutor or another member of staff at some point if you haven't already. These are aimed at making and establishing that simple, personal contact that we all need, to check on well-being primarily and then to see how the online learning is going and how we can support.

You may have seen some discussion in the media about the issuing of £15 vouchers each week to the families of those who are entitled to Free School Meals (FSM). Like many schools, we have applied to be part of this. There have been delays in the system but we are hoping to be able to issue the vouchers shortly. There has also been a recent announcement about the potential to apply for IT equipment for students in Year 10 who do not have online access. Again, we are exploring this possibility.

Below are a couple of pieces of key information I have been asked to pass on from Devon County Council and national Government. The latest guidance for parents and carers on the closure of educational settings can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

Public Health England have asked us to remind all of the 'stay at home' message:

- **Do not meet up with friends or family outside your household.**
- **If any family members are going out for non-essential trips please tell them to stop.**
- **For up to date coronavirus information in Devon visit: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/>**

🏠 **Stay Home, Save Lives**

Thank you for your continuing support and I hope that you are coping and will have a decent week. Please do get in touch if we, as a school, can help – with welfare issues as well as learning.

Best wishes



James O'Connell
Principal